

Pam  
Missy.pers.

APR 8 1948  
1738

*Do We Appoint*

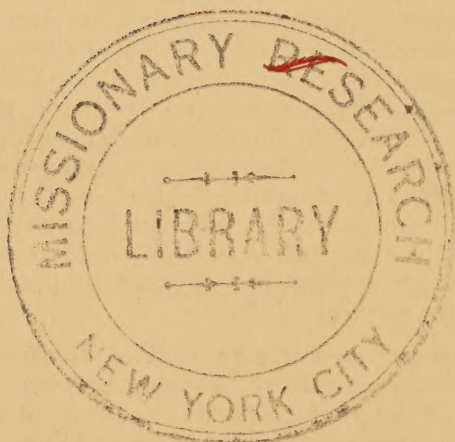
**NON-EVANGELICAL  
MISSIONARIES?**

By

**JESSE R. WILSON**

*Home Secretary*

*American Baptist Foreign Mission Society*



**AMERICAN BAPTIST FOREIGN MISSION SOCIETY**  
152 Madison Avenue • New York 16, N. Y.

# *Do We Appoint*

## **NON-EVANGELICAL MISSIONARIES?**

---

---

**D**OES the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society appoint non-evangelical missionaries? Some allege that it does, and they carelessly imply that no serious effort is made by the Board of Managers to learn what a candidate for missionary service believes. To ask why such statements are made would be to enter into the realm of motivation where God alone can judge fairly, but it is not without some significance that most of those who spread such reports do so in order to gain support for some other missionary sending agency.

The answer to the question is: The American Baptist Foreign Mission Society never knowingly appoints a missionary whose Christian faith is not in accordance with what is generally held to be the evangelical faith of Christians. The word "knowingly" is used only to cover two contingencies. First, for the sake of argument, we should concede the remote possibility that some candidate for appointment might deliberately deceive the Board into believing that he is an evangelical Christian when in reality he is not. But is it likely that such a person would want to become a missionary? And how could he deceive not only the Board but those friends who, knowing him intimately, recommend his appointment? Second, one can imagine the unpredictable possibility that a person whose faith at the time of appointment is above suspicion may lose his faith. But again the question is in order: Why should one want to continue as a missionary if he no longer has a redemptive faith to proclaim? What would almost invariably happen in a situation of this kind is that such a person would come home and would voluntarily eliminate himself from missionary service.

And so the answer stands: The Board of Managers of the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society does not appoint non-evangelical missionaries. The steps it takes in order to know whether the candidate holds to the evangelical faith and what is meant by "evangelical" will become clear in the following paragraphs.

## ***Preliminary Contacts with Candidates***

A person usually comes to the attention of the Candidate Department through the recommendation of someone who knows him, through a personal meeting with the Candidate Secretary when the latter visits colleges and seminaries, or through the individual's own initiative in correspondence.

To such a person there is sent a Preliminary Information Form for Prospective Candidates. The information received is treated confidentially and serves as a basis for future correspondence between the person and the Candidate Department. The filing of the form involves no obligation on the part of either the individual or the Society. In addition to the usual biographical questions, this form requests information regarding the individual's Christian life and faith, his church relations, his educational preparation, and his missionary motives.

Some of the sixty-seven questions asked even in this preliminary form are: "Are you a member of a Baptist church?" "What are your personal prayer habits?" "Do you regularly or frequently engage in devotional reading of the Bible?" "What books on Christian life and thought have influenced you most in the last two years?" "In what way have you helped to bring others to Christ?" "Are you thinking of missionary service as a life work?"

On this preliminary form also the candidate is asked to give seven references: his pastor, two teachers, a Christian business man (former employer, if possible), a fellow student, and two other friends.

Upon receipt of this preliminary form, properly filled out, the Candidate Secretary endeavors to arrange a personal conference. This gives opportunity for the prospective candidate to ask questions which inevitably arise and for the Secretary better to know the candidate.

## ***What the Candidate's Friends Say***

If the candidate by this time gives promise of becoming a good missionary, and if a person of his qualifications is needed for a post which is scheduled to be filled, letters are directed to the seven people who were given by the candidate as references and they are requested to fill out and return a Candidate Reference Blank. On this blank further con-

fidential information is sought concerning the candidate's qualifications for missionary service — his personality, intellectual equipment, leadership ability, fitness for team work, attitude toward Christian truth, aptitude for winning people to Christ, and his practical experience in any line of work. Some of the thirty-two questions asked are: "How long, how recently, and under what circumstances have you known the candidate?" "Is he a convinced Christian?" "Is he in accord with the historic evangelical faith?" "Does he have an aptitude for winning people to Christ?" "Do you recommend appointment?"

After these and other questions have been asked, the following request is made:

Unhampered by any questions or leads from us, please state frankly your opinion as to the general fitness of the candidate for the work of a foreign missionary. Especially, information on any important matter not elicited by previous questions should be set forth.

### ***The Formal Application for Appointment***

If the information received on the preliminary blank and the reference forms and from any other contacts indicate that the individual merits serious consideration, he is asked to present his formal application by filing with the Candidate Secretary an Application for Missionary Service. This form contains questions regarding the applicant's missionary purpose, his attitude toward non-Christian faiths, toward other races, and his national and international point of view. He is also asked pertinent questions concerning his willingness to cooperate with the Board and his fellow missionaries. The applicant submits at the same time a life sketch covering his early home life, Christian experience, growth in the Christian life, and motives in seeking missionary appointment, and a statement of Christian belief. Accompanying this formal application, he is asked to file a physical report giving the result of a complete physical examination by a competent physician.

Among the thirty-four questions asked on this application are the following: "What does Jesus Christ mean to you in your life and thought?" "Will the supreme and controlling aim in your missionary service be to make Jesus Christ known to men as their Saviour and Lord?" "In your judgment what is the best way to make Jesus Christ known?" "What

deep and significant Christian convictions and/or experiences do you have to communicate to non-Christian people?" "Missionaries should frankly and without apology attempt to persuade men to become disciples of Jesus. What is your attitude toward such a policy?" "What is the place of the church in your life and thought?"

At the place where a statement of the candidate's Christian faith is called for, the following instruction is given:

This statement should be most carefully prepared. It should represent your own thinking and should be in your own words, though quotations, especially from the Scriptures, may be used freely if desired. It is called for in an effort to ascertain two things: (1) Do you have a clear understanding of the Christian faith? (2) Are you able to set that faith forth in a brief and intelligible form? Using any order you prefer and writing concisely, you should cover even in this brief summary such points as: your belief in God, in Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Bible, sin, salvation, duties to one's fellow men, the church, the world mission of the church, prayer, immortality, and any other leading truths which go to make up the body of your Christian faith and message.

### ***Review by the Secretaries***

When the reports have all been filed, a summary of all that is known of the candidate is brought to the attention of each of the executive officers of the Society. Later, the application and all papers pertaining to the candidate are given careful consideration in a meeting of these officers. If the vote of the officers is favorable, the Candidate Secretary of the Society then by mail brings the Candidate to the attention of the members of the Board's Candidate Committee. A digest of the facts obtained and full, unabridged copies of the life sketch and of the statement of Christian belief are sent to each member of the committee.

### ***Review and Interview by the Committee***

The next step is to bring the candidate before a meeting of the Candidate Committee of the Board, at which any Board member may be present. The candidate is asked to retell his Christian experience and to restate the content of his Christian faith. Then any member of the committee, or any other Board member present, is free to ask the candidate

questions. After the candidate has left the meeting, his papers and his oral statements are reviewed and his fitness for missionary service discussed. Only then is the vote taken.

### *Appearance Before the Board*

If the Committee's vote is favorable, the candidate is presented to the Board, where he once more makes a brief statement of his Christian experience and belief and his motives in seeking missionary appointment. Questions directed to the candidate by any Board member are also again in order. After the candidate has left the room, discussion is called for and the vote is taken. The vote is favorable only if the candidate comes within the limits of the Society's evangelical policy with respect to his Christian experience and theological beliefs and if he meets the other high standards of the Board with respect to formal training, health, character, and aptitude for Christian service.

The essence of that evangelical policy within the limits of which appointments are made is as follows:

Guided by the facts that Baptists have always been known as evangelicals, and that the gospel is the most important message of the Scriptures, we have demanded that all our officers and missionaries be loyal to the gospel. We will appoint only suitable evangelical men and women; we will appoint evangelicals, and we will not appoint non-evangelicals. And by the gospel we mean the good news of the free forgiveness of sin and eternal life (beginning now and going on forever) through a vital union with the crucified and risen Christ, which brings men into union and fellowship with God. This salvation is graciously offered on the sole condition of repentance and faith in Christ and has in it the divine power of regeneration and sanctification through the Spirit. The only reason we have for accepting this gospel is our belief in the deity of Christ in whom we see the Father, a faith founded on the trustworthiness of the Scriptures, and the fact that we have experienced this salvation in our own hearts.

This policy is the answer to what the Board means by "evangelical" and "non-evangelical," and this whole statement reveals what great care is taken to appoint as missionaries only those who have been called of God by the quiet working of the Spirit and who will make worthy ambassadors of the Lord Jesus Christ.